

The Students of the Graduate Program in the History of Science & Medicine YALE UNIVERSITY

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voH

BY BRENDAN MATZ // WRITTEN ON OCT 15, 2009 // [RESEARCH ABROAD](#), [STUDENT LIFE](#)

While working on my dissertation prospectus, I realized that I wanted to bring my project beyond the American context. Struck by compelling similarities and differences between the American and German genetics communities, I decided to take on the same comparison for the history of agricultural animal breeding. During the fall of my third year, I began to explore possible funding sources for doing research abroad. The department had provided me with a pre-prospectus grant to spend a month in Germany over the summer scouting out archives, so I was able to draft detailed grant proposals and offer a reasonable research plan. The German Academic Exchange Service, an agency within the German government, provided me with funding for the fall semester to serve as a research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. My time at the Max Planck was spent attending colloquia, meeting with German scholars, and conducting research in libraries and archives in Berlin, Munich, Halle, and Bonn. I had a great experience doing research in Germany, and I recommend the DAAD grants for anyone planning to focus on a German topic. One thing to keep in mind if you're considering research abroad is your level of reading proficiency in the language. As historians we often must wade through large amounts of material before we find the gems of evidence we're looking for. Unless you can read quickly, the process can be frustrating. Difficulty reading rapidly in German can be compounded by the fact that most printed materials from the 19th and early 20th century used Gothic type. For handwritten sources from this period, the idiosyncratic script (or "Shrift") must be mastered before you can get the gist of things.



tdw

BY ROBIN SCHEFFLER // WRITTEN ON OCT 13, 2009 // [EXTERNAL FUNDING](#), [STUDENT LIFE](#)

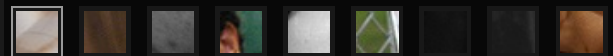
The National Science Foundation (NSF) awards ~1000 Graduate Research Fellowships every year, although this number is slated to rise in the next few years under the terms of the economic stimulus package passed by Congress earlier in the year. These fellowships are very generous and carry few obligations outside of study, so it's good news for historians of science and medicine that one of the NSF application categories is in history of science. The other good news is that a large part of the work entailed by the NSF fellowship application- developing a research plan, soliciting recommendation letters, etc.- draws on the work that you have done or will be doing to in your graduate school applications.



The major part of your time will be spent preparing three ~1000 word essays: the Personal Statement, Statement of Research Experience, and Research Proposal. In preparing these, pay attention to the NSF fellowship announcement (available [here](#)), especially the two "merit review criteria," broader impacts and intellectual merit, that it outlines. The NSF application evaluators will want to have these questions answered about your project before all else in your application. Keep in mind too that your essays will only get about 5-10 minutes with each reviewer, so write clearly and always try to be considerate towards your readers.



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When writing applications, many feel overwhelmed by the gap between what they know and what they can place on the page. Remember that your readers will only know what's in your application, so it's important to use your essays to tell a story about yourself as an individual and a scholar that's coherent and self-contained. If this means curtailing your discussion of some of your strengths in favor of others don't worry about making this choice. It's as important to show that you're capable of thinking and writing about a topic at a high level even if that one topic doesn't encompass all of your interests and abilities.

Finally, be sure to start early and always show your drafts to others. Not only will you have a better application but you'll be likely to find that your professors and peers can help you discover new things about your interests and ambitions.

vdH

BY ZIV EISENBERG // WRITTEN ON OCT 13, 2009 // CHILD CARE, STUDENT LIFE

My baby daughter, Alma, was born a mere three days after I passed my oral exam.

I was begging her for months to stay in utero until I was done with the third-year ordeal that is orals; as it turned out, she was kind enough to listen. A full member of the HSHM community, Baby Alma is currently our resident expert on breastmilk and on cooing theory, and has recently developed interest in the history of biology (that is, she likes staring at trees).



Surviving graduate school is a challenge. Raising a baby is a challenge. Surviving graduate school and at the same time raising a child is a huge challenge. Gladly, Yale and HSHM offer more than a supportive shoulder for students facing such challenge.

All HSHM doctoral students get full health insurance as part of their financial aid package. Throughout the entire pregnancy, my wife (a Yale faculty) received excellent care by the OB/GYN staff. Although my own physiology prevents me from being a patient there, I can assure you that most of the department's doctors and nurses are as good as you will find anywhere else. The delivery took place at Yale-New Haven Hospital, and despite our unusual birth (less than 2 hours, quite spectacular for a first child) we had a very good experience in the 2.5 days we spent there. Alma is now at the care of the University Health Services' Pediatric Departments, and again, we have nothing but good words to say about the quality of care and service we get. Throughout the entire pregnancy and since Alma was born, our expenses have been minimal; our (standard) insurance is comprehensive enough to cover prenatal and pediatric care.

In 2010, University Health Services is expected to relocate to a new, state of the art facility in Science Hill, a step I assume would improve our patient experience.

The Graduate School allows all its students-turned-parents (regardless of gender) to go on parental relief during or following the term in which the birth or adoption occurs. During that semester the student's academic clock stops, effectively adding an additional term to the total time to degree. During this period, students remain registered, receive the full financial aid package and have departmental academic expectations modified to best suit the specific situation! Very few universities offer such a program to its grad students (full details of the parental relief program can be viewed [here](#)). If you plan on joining HSHM with your family (or expect to start one during your stay here), I also urge you to consult the grad school's website for further details on family life by visiting [here](#).

In addition, the McDougal Center operates special programs for grad students with families. You can learn about those activities by joining the McDougal Family listserv [here](#).

Like in many other universities and cities across the country, child care can be a drag. The university operates several highly acclaimed day cares, but despite ongoing attempts to increase the number of spots (the Provost office has recently announced that dozens of new spots will be opened in 2010), all facilities have long wait lists. Getting on those wait list as early as possible is a wise move. Although Yale day care facilities are subsidized they are still expensive, particularly for grad students on a university stipend. Hence, many parents choose to send their children to other day care facilities in Hamden, Woodbridge, West Haven, and, of course, New Haven. Some of those places are as good as Yale's. You can obtain a list of child care solutions and information through the

McDougal Center or through the university WorkLife program [here](#). WorkLife's coordinator is Susan Abramson, whose contact information can be obtained through the [university directory](#).

Throughout the pregnancy period and since having our baby, I got great support from everyone at HSHM. The professors, students, and staff have been incredible in offering a hand, slightly adjusting academic demands, and demonstrating sufficient flexibility that contributes to my ability to juggle parental and academic responsibilities.

Surviving graduate school and at the same time raising a child is a huge challenge. Being at Yale's HSHM makes that challenge a doable one.

talW

BY DEBBIE DOROSHOW // WRITTEN ON JUL 22, 2008 // MD/PHD, STUDENT LIFE

Being an MD/PhD student in the history of science and medicine is unusual; most people don't know what to make of it. The same is true of being an MD/PhD student at two different institutions.



At Yale, there are five of us – more than at any other program, to my knowledge. Our clinical experience is valued, especially as it can sometimes illuminate a point of discussion, but more importantly, our contributions as historians are valued just as much as those of our non-medical colleagues.

As a graduate student in HSHM, you belong to a small, tight intellectual community of students and professors who share your interests and care about you as a person. All the students here are both my colleagues and my friends, who are as happy to read a draft of a paper or give me ideas for a research topic as they are to chat over lunch about life as a grad student or watch my apartment while I'm away.

Though it's sometimes hard to be away from the wards, I feel sure that studying the history of medicine will help me be a better clinician (and vice versa), and that Yale is the right place for me.

talW

BY MATT GUNTERMAN // WRITTEN ON JUL 21, 2008 // GRAD HOUSING, STUDENT LIFE

Graduate students have many options available to them when it comes to housing on and around the campus of Yale. You can find this information compiled at the website of the [Offices of Graduate Student Housing](#).



I myself have lived in two of the campus grad dorms: the **Hall of Graduate Studies** ([HGS](#)) and **Helen Hadley Hall** ([HHH](#)). For the past year I've lived off campus with a flatmate in a two-bedroom apartment in the East Rock neighborhood, where the bulk of the grad student population lives.

I moved into the HGS dorm (the **History Department** and **Program in the History of Science & Medicine** are also housed there) when I first arrived at Yale in the late summer of 2003, and I have to say that HGS is a wonderful environment for a grad student in his or her first year. The dorm rooms with their hardwood floors, fireplaces, built-in bookshelves, and lead-glass windows certainly provide a scholarly ambience.

Students living in HGS are required to buy a meal plan for the Yale dining halls; the price of dorm room rental and meal plan combined is roughly what you'd pay for a private, one-bedroom apartment off campus. HGS, which has dorm space for about 160 graduate students, has its own rather stunning dining hall. You meet and get to know a wide range of your fellow grad students when you're eating in the dining hall day in and day out. The conversation is always interesting, and in the end you've made some really close friends. My own observation after my first year at Yale was that I had a more academically diverse group of friends by living on campus than my peers who lived off campus.

The culture of HGS started to wear on me after the second year there. I signed up for a third year but then moved out after the fall semester when I took a one-year

leave of absence from Yale to pursue an outside project. By the end of the second year HGS felt a wee bit closterphobic for me. Perhaps you get to know some people too well and start to have more complicated histories with them.

After I came back from my year's leave I moved into HHH for one semester. What's the good thing about HHH? It's the cheapest room you'll find anywhere near campus, and grad students living there don't have to buy meal plans because there's no dining hall (there are communal kitchens on each floor of the building). Students pay roughly \$500/month for a room 10'x10' room. That price includes all utilities and Internet. The dorm has a small gym, a computer lab, and a common space. All that said, however, I don't recommend living in HHH unless price of housing is your main concern. There are multiple problems with the building and living setup, and Yale plans to demolish the structure soon and put up new grad student housing elsewhere.

For the past year I've lived off campus in a really great apartment in the East Rock neighborhood. It's a stylish place, and I have a fantastic landlord. It's located one block north of the Yale Blue-Line shuttle route, which is about as far away from campus as you can get and still be in New Haven city limits. From where the shuttle stops to the stop nearest HGS is a roughly 15-minute ride. The ride from the same shuttle stop to the Med School is about 25 minutes.